ALERT

THE UNIVERSAL FELLOWSHIP OF METROPOLITAN COMMUNITY CHURCHES

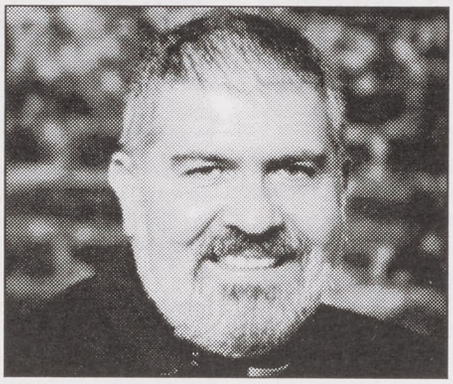
News from the UFMCC on AIDS Legislation, Education, Research and Treatment.

December 1995

Rev. Troy Perry to Attend White House Conference on HIV/AIDS

Rev. Elder Troy Perry, Founder and Moderator of UFMCC, has been invited to attend the first ever White House Conference on HIV/AIDS, on December 6, 1995.

In the letter of invitation, President Clinton wrote to Rev. Perry, "The White House Conference on HIV and AIDS will give our nation an opportunity to examine and consider the impact of HIV and AIDS on our people, our institutions, our communities and our society as a whole. Together we can build on our work over the past three years to address this critical problem. Through this conference, I believe we can raise public awareness about HIV and AIDS and strengthen our national response. Because of your leadership on this critical issue, I would like you to participate in this very special meeting."



Rev. Elder Troy D. Perry

Approximately 200 people will be attending the day-long conference, which has been organized by the President's HIV/AIDS Council. Dr. Scott Hitt, chair of the President's Council, told *Update*, Southern California's gay and lesbian weekly newspaper, "No one should expect too much out of this. The intent is to make the country aware and develop information for the President. It will also show the country the extent of the commitment made by the Clinton Administration."

After the President receives reports from break-out meetings at the conference, the Council intends to recommend that the administration focus efforts on finding a cure. It is anticipated that a WEB page address will be established so that people online can give input to the Conference. ▼

UFMCC AIDS Ministry Is On The Internet!

Selected UFMCC AIDS Ministry resources are now available on the Internet, as well as a bi-weekly column from the Rev. Steve Pieters. Three pamphlets, "HIV/AIDS: Is It God's Judgement?", "Spiritual Strength for Survival" and "Choose Life" can be accessed at *The Body*, Body Health Resources Corporation's WEB site. In addition, Rev. Steve Pieters, Field Director of UFMCC AIDS Ministry, will be a regular columnist for The Body.

The Body is cyberspace's first one-stop shop for reaching AIDS experts, organizations, and publications nationwide. "We want to do more than inform -- we want to create a global community for people concerned with AIDS," said Jamie Marks, founder of *The Body*. *The Body* is the first place online where anyone concerned with AIDS will look for resources dealing with its medical, cultural, legal, and political aspects. "There are some AIDS resources online, but they're fragmented, and you really have to know where to look. *The Body* has everything in one place," Marks said.

(see "The Internet", page 3)

World AIDS Day: "Shared Rights, Shared Responsibilities"

The World Health Organization set the 1995 theme for World AIDS Day, December 1, 1995, as "Shared Rights, Shared Responsibilities," to highlight the importance of equality and solidarity in the global response to HIV/AIDS. Metropolitan Community Churches around the world have held special observances on this theme.

Shared Rights -- Every person has the right to be able to avoid infection, the right to health care if sick with AIDS, and the right to be treated with dignity and without discrimination. Regardless of HIV status, shared rights also include the right to liberty, to freedom of movement, to employment, to marry and found a family, and to seek asylum.

Shared Responsibilities -- Individuals have a responsibility to protect themselves and others from infection. Families and communities have a responsibility to educate their members on AIDS prevention and to care for those affected by HIV. Governments, fulfilling their duty to protect public health, have a responsibility to implement appropriate HIV preven-

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World AIDS Day:...

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tion policies and to ensure that all their citizens have equal access to available care services. The international community has a responsibility to ensure effective global cooperation on HIV/AIDS, and to support poorer countries in meeting the challenge.

There is no conflict between individual rights and public health in the context of HIV/AIDS. In fact, the protection of human rights promotes public health, because discriminatory and coercive measures discourage people from coming forward for information and treatment.

Metropolitan Community Churches around the world have participated in this annual observance: to remember those who have been lost to the disease, to raise public awareness of ongoing needs for care of those who are ill, and to educate persons in responsibility and prevention. A phone and e-mail poll, conducted before World AIDS Day, sought to discover the answer to "What are you doing for World AIDS Day?"

--"We're holding an ecumenical vigil — trying to draw people both from the Kansas State campus and the community ministerial alliance. We will light candles and remember the names of local people who have died." --Rev. Denise Leopold, MCC of the Open Arms, Manhattan, KS.

--"MCC Liverpool will have its first worship service on World AIDS Day, and we have secured money from the World AIDS Day Trust here in England to advertise ourselves in the press. Please pray for this new group as it starts to show God's love and care in the middle of this pandemic." --Rev. Andy Braunston, MCC Liverpool, United Kingdom.

--"MCC Washington DC's Deacons are planning a special observance on Sunday, October 1, with panels from the Names Project displayed in the sanctuary and testimonies from members who are living with HIV/AIDS. Also, we will be participating in an Interfaith Service of Remembrance and Hope, on November 30 here in DC. I believe that we will be a co-sponsor, along with many other national and local organizations, of the service, that our Gospel Choir will be singing, and that I will be participating in some way in the service." --Rev. Candace Shultis, MCC Washington, DC.

--"We're holding an AIDS Candlelight Vigil in a park uptown, and then marching through downtown Charlotte — to remember and to challenge others to act. Then on AIDS Sunday, a Roman Catholic priest who runs many retreats for HIV/AIDS will be our special speaker. We will also introduce an AIDS candle - a large, imposing candle - to be lit during the prayers each Sunday." --Rev. Randy Votsch, MCC Charlotte, NC.

--"From what I hear, CNN will broadcast from Dallas that day. We certainly hope to have them here. We are having a worship service at 12 noon. Positive Voices, our HIV+ Choir, will premier several selections from their CD (no name as of this writing)." --Rev. Susan Heiskell, Cathedral of Hope MCC, Dallas, TX.

--"In the past, MCC has organized vigils and memorials; now other community organizations are taking the lead. The church's new focus is intimate personal care as we start having persons with AIDS/HIV within the church, rather than education and memorials for the larger community. We will have a special service for our family and friends, focusing on our Memorial Wall - which includes any losses, not only AIDS - and offer prayer and anointing." --Rev. Gina Hartung, MCC Shepherd of the Plains, Great Falls, MT.

--"Having a meeting of local AIDS activists, to strategize how to get the government to keep finding AIDS work. Also a candlelight vigil at the church." --Rev. Bonnie Long, MCC Paducah, KY.

--"I will be participating in an ecumenical memorial service with Methodists, Episcopal, Catholic, and possibly Baptist clergy. And for the first time, we will be holding a service for students and faculty with the campus ministers at Appalachian State." --Cindy Long, MCC of the High Country, Boone, NC.

--"I will be the guest of River City MCC and the AIDS Interfaith Association in Sacramento, CA. In addition to preaching at MCC, I will be keynoting the Candlelight Vigil on the steps of the state capitol, and addressing the clergy association of greater Sacramento." --Rev. Steve Pieters, Field Director of UFMCC AIDS Ministry. ▼

Pieters Returns Refreshed From Leave of Absence

Rev. Steve Pieters, Field Director of UFMCC AIDS Ministry, has returned from his leave of absence. "This break was a real blessing, and a deeply appreciated gift from the UFMCC Administration. I feel great!"

Pieters, a 13-year survivor of HIV and AIDS, climbed 5 mountains in New Hampshire, and hiked daily through the woods around his family's summer home. "Now I'm ready to get back to work, and tackle the challenges of UFMCC AIDS Ministry."

In his absence, Rev. Mark Lee, pastor of MCC Family in Christ in Ft. Collins, CO, kept monthly tabs on UFMCC Leadership living with HIV/AIDS, as well as wrote up HIV/AIDS information for Keeping in Touch and ALERT. Mr. Roi Hudson-Anaya kept on top of Pieters' mail and phone messages. Alison Arngrim, Bob Schoonover, and Wendy Arnold fielded questions and concerns regarding the Peer Education Program (PEP/MCC). "I'm very grateful to all the people who covered for me," Pieters stated.

Rev. Pieters, who is one of the longest surviving persons with AIDS in the world, is available for preaching and teaching in local churches, districts, and conferences. Rev. Pieters' office is in the global headquarters of the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches, phone (213) 464-5100, ext. 227. His office hours are 9 a.m. - 11 a.m., and 1:30 p.m. - 5 p.m., Monday through Friday. ▼

ALERT is a Quarterly Publication

Readers are reminded that ALERT has become a quarterly newsletter, appearing in January, April, July, and October. During other months, there is a column on "HIV/AIDS Concerns" published in the UFMCC publication, "Keeping in Touch."

The ALERT newsletter contains information on AIDS Legislation, Education, Research and Treatment. The Editor is Rev. Dr. A. Stephen Pieters.

For more information or to send a donation, please write: ALERT, 5300 Santa Monica Blvd., #304, Los Angeles, CA 90029.

UFMCC Presence At U.S. National Skills Building Conference

A number of UFMCC members attended and taught at the annual U.S. National Skills Building Conference, held this year at the Century Plaza Hotel in Los Angeles, October 19-22, 1995. This conference is now the largest AIDS conference in the country, attracting over 2,000 delegates from across the nation, as well as a number of respresentatives from other countries. The conference is co-sponsored by the AIDS National Interfaith Network, the National Minority AIDS Council and the National Association of People with AIDS.

Rev. Herbert Evans, UFMCC Transfer Clergy, was featured as a presenter/facilitator this year. As UFMCC's representative to the AIDS National Interfaith Network (ANIN) Board of Directors, he also served as faculty at the conference. He moderated the ANIN Institute, "AIDS Ministry: Sharing Models, Supporting Lives." He also co-facilitated a workshop entitled "Prevention AIDS Ministry: Care Is Not Enough!", in which he taught about the Peer Education Program (PEP/MCC) in the absence of the Rev. Steve Pieters, who was on leave of absence. That presentation featured the PEP/MCC video as well as the use of UFMCC pamphlets that deal with homosexuality and the Bible. He also convened a workshop entitled "The Clergy and HIV: Personal and Professional Approaches," where he discussed life in the professional clergy as a person living with AIDS.

Alison Arngrim and Bob Schoonover taught the workshop, "How to do a Spiritual Strength for Survival Support Group", based on the manual and pamphlet, both published by UFMCC AIDS Ministry. The workshop was very well-attended, and included several people from around the U.S. who testified to the success of their Spiritual Strength for Survival Support Groups. These groups are now being sponsored not only by many MCC's, but by a number of churches and agencies outside the UFMCC.

Rev. Herbert Evans

Arngrim and Schoonover were also available throughout the conference to serve as consultants for PEP/MCC.

Mr. Ron Jacobs, of MCC Dayton Parish, Dayton, OH, was an enthusiastic participant in the conference, saying, "This collaborative effort by NMAC, NAPWA and ANIN provides the optimum learning experience, vital to the survival of any HIV/AIDS ministry, community based organization, or persons living with AIDS." ▼

The Internet

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The Body will contain four interactive sections:

-***Forums*** will provide easy-to-use access to the Internet's best forums on HIV/AIDS on Usenet. Usage of *The Body's* forums also affords greater confidentiality than most online venues.

-***Insight*** will give medical, legal, and mental health professionals working with HIV/AIDS a chance to comment on their areas of expertise. Contributors include Joel E. Gallant, MD, of the Johns Hopkins School of Medicine, Catherine Hanssens, Esq., AIDS Project Director at Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund, and Rev. Steve Pieters of UFMCC AIDS Ministry.

-***Political Action*** will provide a forum to help organize constituencies seeking a political voice. The section will host groups involved in federal, state, or local political advocacy.

-***Organizations to Join*** will let users read about, join, or contribute to the organizations whose information is carried by *The Body*.

UFMCC AIDS Ministry joins a number of other content providers for *The Body*, including the AIDS Action Council, the American Foundation for AIDS Research, the Gay Men's Health Crisis, Johns Hopkins University AIDS Service, Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund, and Treatment Action Group.

Body Health Resources Corporation's e-mail address is: info@thebody.com. The URL for The Body's WEB site is: http://www.thebody.com. ▼

AIDS, Medicine & Miracles

AIDS, Medicine & Miracles 8th Annual Conference, "What Holds Promise", was held November 9-12, 1995 in Houston, Texas. Featured speakers included Lark Lands, PhD., on nutrition, Gregg Cassin on Opening the Heart, and Charles Steinberg, MD, on Complementary Therapies and Holistic Approaches. AIDS, Medicine & Miracles is a national non-profit organization coordinating holistic retreats for all of us living and working with HIV/AIDS. With a strong emphasis on caring for the whole person, they provide treatment updates covering alternative and complementary therapies, as well as creative experiences designed to touch the heart and soul. For more information, call 800/875-8770. ▼

The UFMCC AIDS Ministry wishes you a joyous and peace filled Holiday Season!

[Thank you for your support.]

CMV: Oral Ganciclovir For Prevention

[The following three announcements are reprinted with permission from AIDS Treatment News, Issue #234, Nov. 3, 1995, published twice monthly by John S. James, P.O. Box 411256, San Francisco, CA 94141, 415/255-0588; Internet: aidsnews@aidsnews.org]

On October 31, Hoffmann-La Roche announced that it had received FDA approval to market oral ganciclovir (Cytovene[TM]) for prevention of CMV disease in persons with advanced HIV infection. Oral ganciclovir had previously been FDA approved, but only for maintenance treatment of CMV retinitis (after the disease had already developed, and been stabilized with intravenous treatment). A Roche Biosciences (formerly Syntex) clinical trial in 725 volunteers with CD4 count less than 100 found a 49% reduction of risk of CMV disease in those randomly assigned to preventive treatment with oral ganciclovir, compared to those who received the placebo. Side effects of the treatment included anemia, neutropenia, and elevated serum creatinine.

CMV: New Screening Program

Hoffmann-La Roche also recently started a CMV Retinitis Screening Program, to teach patients at risk for CMV retinitis to recognize symptoms of the disease between doctor visits, so that they can get rapid treatment. Patients can obtain a kit - including a videotape "Recognizing CMV Retinitis," a brochure, and an Amsler grid, which is used to help diagnose CMV retinitis - by calling the voicemail number 800/624-CHECK. AIDS service organizations can request a physician-led seminar about CMV retinitis and the screening program; call 800/293-7428 or 212/698-1662.

Cryptosporidiosis Information Phone/FAX Line

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control has started a phone and fax service for information about cryptosporidiosis. Callers can listen to recorded messages, or receive printed information by fax. The phone number is 404/330-1242. ▼

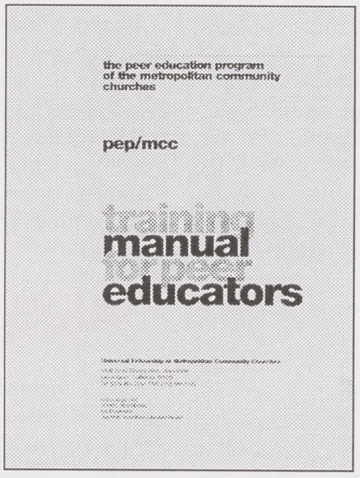
Call For Response On PEP/MCC

Is your local church conducting the Peer Education Program (PEP/MCC)? If so, we'd like to hear how it's going, and report on your activities in ALERT. Reports are beginning to come in from all over the world, reflecting widespread enthusiasm from local communities and service agencies.

For example, the Utah State Department of Health gave a $15,000 grant to MCC Bridgerland, in Logan, UT, USA, to conduct peer education programs using the PEP/MCC format. The group will work among area youth at risk for HIV transmission, including youth in churches, public, private and alternative schools, and incarcerated youth.

The first year goal of the group is to train up to thirty youth aged 13-24 as peer educators. This will entail intensive training sessions using the information and techniques outlined in the PEP/MCC materials, which were delivered to every local Metropolitan Community Church in July, 1995.

Please send your stories, statistics, and any ideas or adaptations you've made to the program to: Rev. Steve Pieters, UFMCC AIDS Ministry, 5300 Santa Monica Blvd., Suite 304, Los Angeles, CA 90029; phone 213/464-5100; fax 213/464-2123. ▼



Manual used with PEP/MCC video

ORDER FORM

Fill out and send to UFMCC Resource Center to receive your PEP/MCC Video and Manual (#AM0011) for $35, add $4.95 s/h. (CA residents include 8.25% tax).

Quantity _____ Total Due _____

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

_____

PHONE _____

Payment by: (U.S. Funds Only) ❒ Check ❒ Visa/Mastercard/AMEX

Card Number: _____ Exp date _____

Signature of cardholder: _____

The Impact Of Homophobia on AIDS

A special report of the U.S. Public Media Center examines *The Impact of Homophobia and Other Social Biases on AIDS*. This report attempts to answer questions such as, "With the world's most advanced public health system, why has there been so little progress in fighting AIDS? Do traditional public health approaches work against highly stigmatized - and politicized - disease? Is our national response to AIDS sound public policy or distorted by hate and fear? Are homophobia and other social biases major risk factors in the spread of HIV? Can AIDS be fought without addressing homophobia?"

The aim of this report is "to stimulate fresh thinking and to encourage new initiatives that move beyond standard public health responses..."

The report is a well-written, challenging document that speaks to anyone confronting HIV/AIDS in the world, or in their lives. To order, call 415/536-3313 or write: AIDS Stigma Report, PMC, 466 Green Street, San Francisco, CA 94133. Please enclose $5 for postage and handling. ▼